

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BONN 13459

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GW PINT UR

SUBJECT: BONN SPECULATION REGARDING RUSSIAN ATTITUDES
TOWARD THE GERMAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

REFS: (A) BERLIN 6419; (B) MOSCOW 11115; (C) USBER 1561;
(D) USBER 1573; (E) BONN 18989 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. RECENT SOVIET AND EAST GERMAN ACTIONS HAVE
STIRRED UP EVEN GREATER SPECULATION IN BONN REGARDING
SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE GERMAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN.
MANY SOVIET ACTIONS, CALCULATED OR NOT, HURT THE SPD,
THOUGH THERE ARE ALSO INTERNAL SPD DISPUTES ABOUT HOW
BEST TO DEAL WITH EASTERN POLICY DURING AN ELECTION
YEAR. OUR SOURCES IN BONN ARE UNABLE TO OFFER ANY
EXPLANATION FOR SOVIET POLICY. END SUMMARY.

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1. A NUMBER OF RECENT RUSSIAN AND EAST GERMAN ACTIONS

HAVE FUELED SPECULATION IN BONN THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO UNDERCUT CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S SPD/FDP COALITION DURING THE CURRENT GERMAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IT HAS ALSO INCREASED SPECULATION REGARDING SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD SPD RELATIONS WITH OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS IN EUROPE.

2. SOME OF THE ACTIONS OR NON-ACTIONS OF THE SOVIETS THAT HAVE DRAWN THE MOST ATTENTION ARE THE FOLLOWING:

-- THE CONTINUING SOVIET REFUSAL TO GRANT THE FRG ANY REPRESENTATIONAL RIGHTS REGARDING BERLIN IN THE THREE OUTSTANDING SOVIET-FRG AGREEMENTS;

-- THE SOVIET SUPPORT FOR EAST GERMAN SHOOTINGS ON THE FRG/GDR BORDER;

-- THE APPARENTLY TOUGH SOVIET STAND CHALLENGING BERLIN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE DIRECTLY ELECTED EC PARLIAMENT;

-- THE TASS STATEMENT REGARDING GERMAN DETENTE POLICY, WHICH CONTAINED BOTH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ELEMENTS BUT SUGGESTED THE RUSSIANS COULD ABIDE WITH ANY OUTCOME OF THE GERMAN ELECTION.

3. THESE SOVIET ACTIONS HAVE CREATED DOUBT IN BONN AND ELSEWHERE IN THE FRG ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS REGARDING DETENTE. THEY HAVE REMINDED THE GERMANS THAT CERTAIN FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS REMAIN UNRESOLVED DESPITE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OSTPOLITIK. EVEN WHEN THE RUSSIANS MAY HAVE INTENDED TO ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE -- AS IN THE TASS STATEMENT -- IT IS THE NEGATIVE THAT HAS MADE THE POLITICAL IMPACT HERE. RUSSIAN BEHAVIOR HAS DEEPENED EXISTING SKEPTICISM ABOUT DETENTE, HAS GIVEN THE CDU AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHALLENGE ONE OF THE PILLARS OF SPD FOREIGN POLICY, AND HAS PUT THE GOVERNMENT IN A DEFENSIVE POSITION FROM WHICH IT HAS FOUND NO AVENUE OF ESCAPE EXCEPT TO RETORT AND THUS INCREASE THE TENSIONS THAT IT DID NOT DESIRE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
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4. SEVERAL SPD OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT RECENT SOVIET ACTIONS APPEAR TO BE INTENDED TO DAMAGE THE SPD DURING THE CLOSE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND COULD REFLECT A SOVIET READINESS TO SEE THE CDU RETURN TO POWER. ONE SPD OFFICIAL HAS RECALLED TO US THAT IN 1972 THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY (NKP) -- OBVIOUSLY AT MOSCOW'S DIRECTION -- HAD INSTRUCTED ITS MEMBERS AND

SUPPORTERS TO VOTE FOR THE SPD CANDIDATE WITH ONE OF THEIR TWO BALLOTS AND FOR THE NKP LIST WITH THE OTHER BALLOT (THUS, IN THE COMPLEX GERMAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM, HELPING SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES IN MARGINAL DISTRICTS WITHOUT LOWERING THE PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE THAT THE NKP WOULD RECEIVE AS A PARTY). THIS SAME OFFICIAL SAID THAT IN 1972 THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP HAD

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EVEN ASKED SPD LEADERS WHAT RUSSIA COULD DO TO HELP THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN THE ELECTION AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD SUBSEQUENTLY PUT PRESSURE ON THE GDR TO MAKE CONCESSIONS THAT WOULD HELP THE SPD. IN 1976, HOWEVER, THE SOVIET UNION HAS TOLD THE NKP TO CAMPAIGN HARD AGAINST THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND THE SOVIET UNION HAS GENERALLY MAINTAINED AN UNCOOPERATIVE LINE IN CONVERSATIONS WITH SENIOR SPD OFFICIALS.

5. ONE OF THE MORE BIZARRE ASPECTS OF RUSSIAN BEHAVIOR HERE IS THE PERSONAL CAMPAIGN THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR FALIN APPEARS TO BE CONDUCTING AGAINST FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER. THIS IS NOT IN ITSELF NEW, BUT IT HAS TAKEN SOME QUIXOTIC TURNS. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME OF FALIN'S EMBASSY STAFF HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING THE STORY THAT GENSCHER -- AFTER SOME DELAY -- OFFERED AN APPOINTMENT TO FALIN ON THE VERY DAY THAT FALIN WAS RETURNING TO MOSCOW ALTHOUGH THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD HAVE

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HAD NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET WITH FALIN EARLIER. FALIN REFUSED THE APPOINTMENT. AS TOLD BY THE RUSSIANS THIS STORY IS CLEARLY INTENDED TO MAKE GENSCHER APPEAR RUDE OR INEPT.

6. POLITICAL JOURNALISTS HAVE TOLD US THAT SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING STORIES IN BONN TO THE EFFECT THAT THE FRG -- PARTICULARLY THE EXCESSIVELY "LEGALISTIC" GENSCHER -- HAS MISSED CHANCES TO ADVANCE DETENTE. AS IF TO SUGGEST THAT THE CONSERVATIVES COULD DO NO WORSE, SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS ARE PASSING THE WORD THAT THEY REGARD CSU LEADER STRAUSS AS "ANTI-COMMUNIST," NOT ANTI-RUSSIAN, AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS NOT WORRIED ABOUT KOHL'S ACCESSION TO POWER BECAUSE KOHL HAS ALREADY PROMISED MOSCOW THAT GERMAN MONEY WOULD CONTINUE TO FLOW.

7. THE GDR, EITHER AT SOVIET INSTRUCTION OR WITH SOVIET CONCURRENCE, HAS BEEN PURSUING A LINE ALSO DAMAGING TO THE SPD. LOCAL SPD OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, AT THE GDR OFFER OF A NORTHERN CROSSING POINT IN WEST BERLIN THAT RAISED MORE PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT THAN IT SOLVED. THE CONTINUING TRIGGER-HAPPINESS OF EAST GERMAN BORDER GUARDS HAS HAD DEEP POLITICAL IMPACT HERE, AND THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD IN DEALING WITH THE BORDER SHOOTINGS HAVE CLEARLY DAMAGED THE COALITION. SUCH POSITIVE EAST GERMAN GESTURES AS THE QUICK RELEASE OF TWO WEST GERMAN PATROLMEN SEVERAL WEEKS AGO HAVE BEEN LOST OUT OF SIGHT.

8. SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS MAY ARISE FROM A FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES THAT GOES BEYOND THE CONTROL OF THE STATES INVOLVED. INCIDENTS CAN OCCUR AT ANY TIME ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN THE TWO GERMANIES, AND IT MAY JUST BE COINCIDENTAL THAT THEY ARE HAPPENING SO FREQUENTLY NOW. ACTIONS THAT BEAR NO RELATION TO THE GERMAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, LIKE GARTENSCHLAEGER'S THEFT OF THE

DEATH TRAPS AND WEINHOLD'S SHOOTING OF TWO EAST GERMAN
BORDER GUARDS, MAY HAVE EXACERBATED THE NERVOUSITY OF THE
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EAST GERMAN GUARDS. THE SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY
HAVE OBJECTED TO A GREATER BERLIN ROLE IN THE EC NO
MATTER WHEN THE SUBJECT AROSE, AND IT WAS JUST
COINCIDENTAL THAT IT SHOULD ARISE IN THE LATTER STAGES
OF AN ELECTION YEAR. THEREFORE, NOT EVERYTHING THAT
HAS HAPPENED NEED BE ATTRIBUTED TO SOVIET OR EAST GERMAN
PLANNING, ALTHOUGH DIFFERENT DECISIONS COULD OBVIOUSLY
HAVE BEEN MADE IN MOSCOW OR EAST GERMANY. IN FACT,
THE RUSSIANS ARE STILL MAKING SOME TRADITIONAL GESTURES
OF APPROVAL TOWARD THE FRG, SUCH AS INCREASED EMIGRATION
OF ETHNIC GERMANS AND POSITIVE COMMERCIAL RELATIONS
INCLUDING THE EXHIBIT SCHEDULED FOR WEST BERLIN,
THOUGH THOSE -- LIKE THE ACTIONS CITED IN REFS (B) AND
(D), TEND TO GET LOST IN THE SHUFFLE. IT MAY SIMPLY
BE, AS WE SUGGESTED EARLIER (REF E), THAT THE SOVIETS
ARE UNABLE TO MAKE THE DECISIONS NECESSARY TO MOVE
GERMAN-SOVIET RELATIONS FORWARD EVEN THOUGH THEY REMAIN
COMMITTED TO DETENTE.

9. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF
THE WEST GERMAN POLITICAL PROCESS -- ESPECIALLY WITHIN
THE SPD AND ITS COALITION -- HAVE EXACERBATED SOVIET-
GERMAN TENSIONS. SCHMIDT, WHO IS RESERVED AND PRAGMATIC
ON EAST-WEST ISSUES, HAS REPLACED BRANDT, WHO WAS
VISIONARY AND ALMOST ROMANTIC. WEHNER AND BAHR ARE LESS

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INFLUENTIAL THAN BEFORE. GENSCHER, PERHAPS AT SCHMIDT'S CONCURRENCE, HAS DELIBERATELY DISTANCED HIMSELF FROM THE SOVIET UNION AND HAS MADE A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS THAT MAY HAVE HELPED THE COALITION PROTECT ITS RIGHT FLANK AGAINST THE CDU BUT HAVE NO DOUBT HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT IN MOSCOW. A FASCINATING EXAMPLE OF THIS KIND OF INTRA-GERMAN POLITICAL PLAY IS THE STATEMENT THAT GAUS MADE TO AMBASSADOR COOPER DISASSOCIATING SCHMIDT FROM GENSCHER'S PLAN TO CALL THE BORDER SHOOTINGS TO THE ATTENTION OF THE UNGA (REF A). THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN BONN INDICATES THAT SCHMIDT ENDORSED GENSCHER'S STATEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT BEFORE GENSCHER ISSUED IT, BUT THERE MAY BE REASONS WHY SCHMIDT OR OTHERS WISH TO CONCEAL THIS ASSOCIATION.

10. THE SPECULATION IN BONN ABOUT THE REASONS FOR SOVIET BEHAVIOR RANGES FAR AND WIDE. IT HAS INCLUDED, FOR EXAMPLE, THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS:
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-- MOSCOW MAY HAVE DECIDED TO BACK AWAY FROM THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS BECAUSE SCHMIDT HAS NOT BEEN AS FORTH-COMING AS HIS PREDECESSOR AND BECAUSE GENSCHER HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT.

-- MOSCOW MAY RESENT THE WAY IN WHICH THE SPD HAS USED GERMAN RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ANTI-COMMUNIST SOCIALISTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE -- ESPECIALLY PORTUGAL.

-- THE SOVIETS MAY PREFER NOT TO HAVE THE SOCIALISTS IN POWER IN BONN IN CASE THE PCI COMES TO POWER IN ITALY, IN ORDER THAT THE PCI MAY BE MORE

ISOLATED IN WESTERN EUROPE AND WOULD NEED TO TURN MORE
TO THE EAST.

-- THE SOVIET UNION AND THE GDR MAY BELIEVE THAT
THEY CAN PURSUE THEIR POLICIES IN EAST GERMANY MORE
COMFORTABLY WHEN THERE IS NOT A SOCIALIST REGIME IN
BONN -- ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT SOCIALIST REGIME IS NOT
AS FRIENDLY AS BEFORE.

-- THE GDR, CONFRONTED WITH A WEAKENING ECONOMY,
A STILL UNSTABLE POLITICAL BASE, BUT WITH CONTINUED
SOVIET DEMANDS FOR HIGH-QUALITY EXPORTS AND FOR
POLITICAL SUPPORT, MAY BE TELLING THE SOVIET UNION THAT
IT CANNOT AFFORD ANY POLITICAL CONCESSIONS -- BY THE
GDR OR THE SOVIET UNION -- TO THE FRG.

-- THE SOVIETS AND THE EAST GERMANS MAY BE TAKING
A TOUGH LINE NOW IN ORDER TO BE IN A BETTER BARGAINING
POSITION LATER.

-- MOSCOW MAY NOT WANT A CDU GOVERNMENT IN WEST
GERMANY, BUT IT MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT IT -- AND THE
GDR -- CANNOT TAKE STEPS THAT WOULD SUPPORT THE SPD/FDP
COALITION NOW. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MOSCOW MAY
SIMPLY BE RESIGNED TO RISK A CDU VICTORY EVEN IF IT
DOES NOT SEEK IT.

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11. AS THE ABOVE GERMAN SPECULATION INDICATES, NONE OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS OR OF THE OTHER POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIT THE VARIOUS EVENTS INTO A LOGICAL PICTURE. SUCH A PICTURE MAY NOT EVEN EXIST. WHAT DOES APPEAR CLEAR, HOWEVER, IS THAT SOVIET POLICY MAKES IT MARKEDLY MORE DIFFICULT IN THIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN THAN IN 1972 FOR THE SPD TO PROMOTE DETENTE AS A POSITIVE ELECTION SLOGAN. IT ALSO INCREASES THE RISK, SHOULD OTHER BORDER INCIDENTS OCCUR IN SEPTEMBER WHEN FEWER GERMANS ARE ON VACATION, THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE FRG ELECTION MAY BE CRUCIALLY AFFECTED BY SOME INCIDENT OVER WHICH NONE OF THE WEST GERMAN PARTIES HAS ANY CONTROL. TO THE DEGREE TO WHICH SOVIET POLICIES AFFECT FUNDAMENTAL GERMAN ATTITUDES, THEY MAY ALSO HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON RUSSO-GERMAN RELATIONS AFTER THE ELECTION EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE MANY POWERFUL FIGURES WITHIN THE SPD AND MANY ELEMENTS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE GERMAN ELECTORATE WHO SEE NO LOGICAL ALTERNATIVE TO DETENTE.

12. BECAUSE, AS WE HAVE INDICATED ABOVE, A GREAT DEAL OF WHAT WE HEAR IN BONN IS IN THE NATURE OF SPECULATION, WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION THAT ADDRESSEES MAY HAVE ON THIS SUBJECT.
HILLENBRAND

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